November 1950

The 8th Army under command of General Walker was on the verge of their final push towards the Yalu River – the dividing line between North Korea and Manchuria. Daily aerial reconnaissance flights detected no major resistance ahead of the 25th Infantry Division battle lines, however LtCol Dolvin knew better.

The inadvertent slaughter of dozens of the Royal Australian Battalion had infuriated British Headquarters, and they were hell bent on retribution. LtCol Dolvin and his trigger-happy lieutenant commanding "D" company were called on the carpet by both British Hqts and the 25th Command Post. Dolvin loses his command and Lt. Nordstrom is ordered to move "D" Co. to the rear near Anju and to stand down. (By 20 December, Lt. Nordstrom is replaced as commander of "D" Co. 89th MTB)

Bob is fresh from the hell of the Tank Action at Chonju, when G-2 pulls him for another mission. Ironically, the tank battle is sanitized and hushed on normal channels. Frustration is evident on the 18 November 'dirty purples' (carbon copy mimeographed daily reports) of the 89th MTB Unit History, when Major Fish wants details of the *supposed* action between the Russian T-34's and the US "Easy 8" tanks. He wants details on the fire fight from the gunner…. unfortunately, the gunner was not available.

As "D" Company was pulled from the front line, SFC Robert Vallejos is tasked by G-2 with a deadly serious mission. Intelligence obtained from a captured enemy prisoner provided the location of General Dean who was held as a POW since last August. Bob and several other soldiers were assigned a special patrol mission – to locate and neutralize any further liability presented to the 8th Army's goal to reach the Yalu River.

"I knew him before the war. (He) was captured and he was tellin the wrong kind of information. He was scared shitless. Well (G-2) says, we gotta do something with that guy, and you're the chosen one to get the job done.' They knew I would do it if I wasn't found out. And then, of course there were Aussies, even one Turk was in the bunch, (we) all had a job to do. Pretty much like what I had to do."

Bob proceeded to "enlighten" me on the quietest way to kill a man.

"If you slice his throat, he's gonna gurgle real loud and somebody is gonna wake up, come in and see what happened. If you stab him in the heart he's gonna holler, no matter where you stab him…but one place. Right here (diaphragm, then go) straight up. That knife has got to be sharp enough so you can rip the breastplate open and it gets right in there. Give it ½ a twist and he'll sink, quietly."

So as not to become a prop for Communist propaganda, the target's head could not be left behind. Whew, this was more information than I could process in one sitting, so I stopped recording and called it a day. Most of this chapter's information comes from the thousands of de-classified SECRET documents posted online by the KOREAN WAR PROJECT. I spent hours scrolling and squinting at the dirty purples. I wanted to have proof that Bob's stories were not fabricated or embellished. My biggest find was Special Order #102, dated 26 July 1950, which proves Bob's transfer from 90th Field Artillery to 25th HQ, and subsequently to the 89th Medium Tank Battalion.

Since I normally left the recording equipment at Bob's shop, I was not surprised to find he had continued with the 'rest of the story'. It was not pleasant by any means. As Bob replayed it for me, he began sobbing. The gist of that assignment digressed rapidly. By 7 November Bob's (Intelligence and Reconnaissance) patrol was ambushed and taken captive. The 1st Battalion was directed to clear the area and rescue the patrol. Bob was not among them. His recon team was ambushed by the Chinese Army, captured and swept along with a tide of hapless US and NATO POW's. No other horror experienced by Robert Vallejos would equal his time as a POW; it profoundly changed his personality.

What a lot us did, because of the cold weather…was pretty rotten what we had to do…so wrong. We were nothing but animals. Bad animals. We'd steal the bodies that were dead…comrades. Slice um from the throat down to the pelvis…pull the guts out, pull out the lungs…put them aside, crawl in the bodies – where it wasn't so cold. It was so wrong…so evil…it was a living hell. We'd stay in these bodies…until the next one died, and we'd really fight for the next body…it was still kind of warm…it was horrible – what we had to do to survive.

On the 22-23 Nov, having lost contact with its key operatives and fearing the worst; G-2 sends the 35th Inf. and 11th ROK (Republic of Korea) soldiers out to look for them. With a special operating channel and call sign "ROBERT", they are instructed to use red star cluster flares as their emergency signal for ambush. Aided by moonlight, Bob recalls a sudden loud commotion that distracted his captors – enabling him and a small group of men to escape. Overall, approx. 28 POWs were recovered on the 24th of November, just before Task Force Wilson's charge to the Yalu River.

"We made it back to our lines and shortly thereafter there was a big offensive, and that's when the 'orderly withdrawal' came (about). Here I am, all fucked up and couldn't get no medical attention."

In the meantime, the commanding officer of the 25th Infantry Division, General Kean, had directed LtCol Dolvin to stabilize a defensive line in preparation for the final push to the Yalu River. The colonel's request for air support to soften the front line was waved and Task Force Dolvin (the point of the spear – CORONA) was told to hold tight, as his replacement, General Wilson, was in route to take over command of the Task Force. This takes place on 24-25 November. After General Wilson arrives, he takes command of the 89th MTB and its support units. LtCol Dolvin is tasked to shepherd two convoys of wounded to the rear lines. As Dolvin endures enemy fire upon the convoys, Task Force Wilson suddenly has its hands full of an undetected Chinese Communist force of approx. 400,000! This foils the 8th Army and General McArthur's advance to the Yalu River. Task Force Wilson does an about face and hurried exit. (26 Nov)

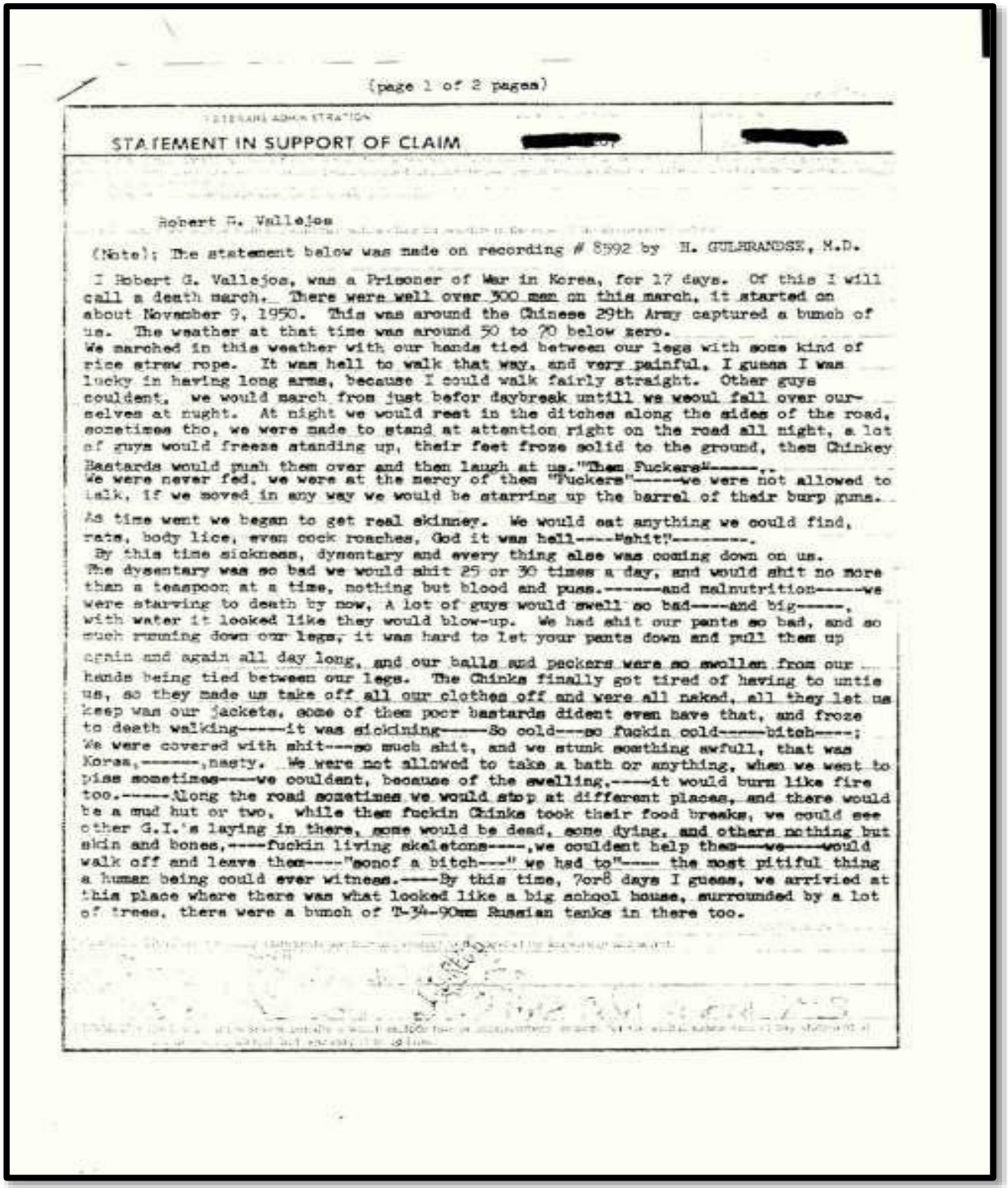
"LtCol Dolvin had called together his liaison and command staff to a meeting to discuss an important assignment. There must have been roughly 30 of us (there). Several high-ranking officers were there (with a) stand for LtCol Dolvin to get up on to talk to us. (Then) sniper fire started, from all directions knocking us guys down. Of course I hadn't been hit yet. A round of heavy artillery came in; right in the middle of everybody; hittin a barrel and exploding. When I hit the ground, shit…I had guts and meat and who knows what else on me. Then I got hit in my leg – I started to holler for a medic! Shit…what medic. There weren't any, cause that wasn't supposed to happen. (The enemy) knew exactly where we were going to have that damn meeting."

During the chaos, command posts for the various units were in danger of being overrun. The administration and supply elements had to destroy files and any equipment that could fall into enemy hands. G-2 dispatches two officers to try and intercept Vallejos for a debriefing – was General Dean still alive? He and other key staff were airlifted by helicopter to the nearest M.A.S.H. (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital).

"They drugged me so damn much I didn't know what the hell was going on. I didn't feel no more pain…no more pain – man oh man that was a GOOD FEELING, no more pain."

When he finally woke up, he was no longer in Korea. He was in the Osaka Army Hospital, Japan. SFC Vallejos had enough of Korea. (And yes, General Dean was still alive.)

Five years after this event, Robert made this recorded statement in support of (his) disability claim, at the Veterans Hospital near Trinidad, CO. *(I was 6 mos. old at this point.)*



(page 1 of 2 pages)

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF CLAIM [redacted] [redacted]

Robert G. Vallejos

(Note): The statement below was made on recording # 8992 by H. GULBRANDSE, M.D.

I Robert G. Vallejos, was a Prisoner of War in Korea, for 17 days. Of this I will call a death march. There were well over 300 men on this march, it started on about November 9, 1950. This was around the Chinese 29th Army captured a bunch of us. The weather at that time was around 50 to 70 below zero.
We marched in this weather with our hands tied between our legs with some kind of rice straw rope. It was hell to walk that way, and very painful. I guess I was lucky in having long arms, because I could walk fairly straight. Other guys couldent, we would march from just befor daybreak untill we wecul fall over ourselves at night. At night we would rest in the ditches along the sides of the road, sometimes tho, we were made to stand at attention right on the road all night, a lot of guys would freeze standing up, their feet froze solid to the ground, then Chinkey Bastards would push them over and then laugh at us."Them Fuckers"-----..
We were never fed, we were at the mercy of them "Fuckers"-----we were not allowed to talk, if we moved in any way we would be starring up the barrel of their burp guns.

As time went we began to get real skinney. We would eat anything we could find, rats, body lice, even cock roaches, God it was hell----"shit"--------.
By this time sickness, dysentary and every thing else was coming down on us. The dysentary was so bad we would shit 25 or 30 times a day, and would shit no more than a teaspoon at a time, nothing but blood and puss.------and malnutrition-----we were starving to death by now, A lot of guys would swell so bad----and big-----, with water it looked like they would blow-up. We had shit our pants so bad, and so much running down our legs, it was hard to let your pants down and pull them up again and again all day long, and our balls and peckers were so swollen from our hands being tied between our legs. The Chinks finally got tired of having to untie us, so they made us take off all our clothes off and were all naked, all they let us keep was our jackets, some of them poor bastards dident even have that, and froze to death walking-----it was sickining-----So cold---so fuckin cold-----bitch----;
We were covered with shit---so much shit, and we stunk something awfull, that was Korea,------,nasty. We were not allowed to take a bath or anything, when we went to piss sometimes----we couldent, because of the swelling.----it would burn like fire too.-----Along the road sometimes we would stop at different places, and there would be a mud hut or two, while them fuckin Chinks took their food breaks, we could see other G.I.'s laying in there, some would be dead, some dying, and others nothing but skin and bones,----fuckin living skeletons----,we couldent help them---we----would walk off and leave them----"sonof a bitch---" we had to"---- the most pitiful thing a human being could ever witness.-----By this time, 7or8 days I guess, we arrivied at this place where there was what looked like a big school house, surrounded by a lot of trees, there were a bunch of T-34-90mm Russian tanks in there too.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF CLAIM

SOCIAL SECURITY NO. [redacted]

VA FILE NO. [redacted]

PRIVACY ACT INFORMATION: The information furnished on this form is authorized by existing law (38 U.S.C. 210 (c)(1)) and is considered relevant and necessary to determine entitlement to veterans benefits applied for under the law. The information submitted may be disclosed outside the Veterans Administration only as permitted by law.

FIRST NAME-MIDDLE NAME-LAST NAME OF VETERAN (Type or print)

Robert G. Vallejos (2of2)

The following statement is made in connection with a claim for benefits in the case of the above-named veteran:

(Note): continuation of recording # 8592 by H. Gulbrandse, M.D.

After about 5 or 10 minutes I guess, a big Russian come out of one of the smaller buildings that was facing us and he started to talk to us in real good English, he told us how stupid we were for fighting and commiting inhuman crimes against the peace loving people of China, and it was unforgivable for us, the United States being the warmongers, and invading North Korea. And if we would sign a confession agreeing to all that bull-shit they (he) personally would see that we would get a bath, clean clothes, good Russian Vodka, and a beautiful woman to take care of us and make love to us.

Then another Russian Fucker appeard with some other chink's and a bunch of papers They were coming down the lines very slowly , some of the guys did sign---I hope they rot in fucken hell----we never saw them again. Here we were separated into groups, me and 16 other guys, a couple of them were Limey's from the Queens Royal Marines, one Turk, and Sgt. Shaw my tank comander, They damn near froze us to death the 16 of us was made to stand at attention while them "Fuckers throwed water on us it was already snowing and some of us were crying that we would die, freeze to death or some fuckin thing. I was so fuckin mad, I hollerd as loud as I could and cussed them all that I could do and one of them ass hole's hit me with his rifle butt, and cold cocked me.---- but befor that they told us that we were to get special treatment, that we were dangerous, "reactionaries" they said.-----when I woke up we were in this one room full of G.I.'s, just like the other poor fuckers we seen before. By this time we had become like them, we would try to get and get outside to shit while crossing over all these other skeletons we would shit on them befor we could make it out side, and all they could do was lay there and cuss us out, we were so damn weak we couldent get up. Our ass hole's had drawn open as big as an egg, these were the sights and night-cares we were living with, always praying we would die or freeze to death, soathing I will never forget, why only a couple, 5or6 of us, still had the strength to plan an escape----we should all of us be dead----there is a lot more to say------I dont to talk no more----shit what for----I swear "nobody" will ever catch me or ever lock me up again----never----them mother fuckers---they will have to kill me first or I will them I dont wanna talk no more sir,----I feel I'm sick-----I'm gonna throw-up----------.

LLW/ajk 010:47/6-11-55

(CONTINUE ON REVERSE)

I CERTIFY THAT the foregoing statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

DATE SIGNED [illegible] SIGNATURE [illegible]

ADDRESS [illegible]

PENALTY - The law provides severe penalties which include fine or imprisonment, or both, for the willful submission of any statement or evidence of a material fact, knowing it to be false.